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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7878  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2280  
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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL  
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 2007

#### In Today's Papers

Parliamentary Observation Gallery Guards Spark Headcover Debate  
Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet and others report Turkish women wearing hats were blocked by guards from entering the general hall to observe a special session on International Women's Day in Turkish Parliament. Women wearing headscarves, however, were allowed into the parliament. Guards reportedly told the women hats were an "accessory" whereas headscarves were "part of an outfit." "This is the AK Party's parliament," reads a Cumhuriyet headline on page one. Papers quote CHP lawmaker Canan Aritman as saying Parliament Speaker Bulent Arinc was disturbed by women wearing hats, a symbol reminding him of a "revolution of the Republic" giving women modern rights. In a message on the occasion of International Women's Day State Minister Nimet Cubukcu criticized the ban on headscarves, calling it "discrimination" as well as "violence directed against women in Turkey."

Turkish Military Prepares Report on Media Institutions  
Radikal, Milliyet, Sabah, Hurriyet and others: Nokta magazine, in its cover story carried a Turkish General Staff (TGS) report assessing media organizations, claiming that the three page memorandum noted that a new accreditation list was prepared by the TGS for the media organizations based on the "credibility" and "closeness" of these organizations to the military. In the report, Hurriyet was described as a paper publishing balanced and objective reports about the military; Milliyet was described as not carrying sensational reports about the military; Sabah was called "reliable" even though it occasionally carried sensational reports about the military; Cumhuriyet was described as an "important paper for advocating secularism." On other papers the report supposedly says the following: Radikal -- even though generally negative, because of its distinct position in the media accreditation must continue, four writers' accreditation should be frozen temporarily; Aksam - Despite occasional technical mistakes, a positive paper for the military; Vatan - Although four columnists are against military intervention in politics, in general, paper carries positive reports on the

military; Star - there are allegations that there are secret partners in the paper from AKP, accreditation should be shelved for a while; TRT -- Islamic and conservative programs are on increase; Anatolia Agency - there are allegations that AA ignores anti-government news.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Bryza on Barzani, the PKK  
Radikal, Vatan and Zaman report Deputy Assistant Secretary Matt Bryza told CNN Turk Washington is not behind the messages issued by the northern Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani. "Barzani knows we are against the PKK, he, however, acts independently," Bryza said. Bryza said the two Kurdish parties in northern Iraq should work for the elimination of the PKK threat in the region. Radikal reports Bryza said when asked if the US would handover the PKK leaders to Turkey, "Soon you'll see concrete results. We are trying to make it happen, in the right place, at the right time, and all this requires a little luck." Bryza also said northern Iraq could have autonomy within the framework of the Iraqi constitution, but stressed that raising options other than a unified Iraq would not bring any good.

Lawsuits against Kurdish Politicians, Ocalan's Lawyers  
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman and others report Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP's provincial head in the southeastern city of Batman has been arrested for expressing support in a press conference for the party's Diyarbakir branch head Hilmi Aydogdu, who said last month an attack on Kirkuk would be regarded as one made on Diyarbakir. Former Kurdish party DEP lawmaker Sedat Yurttas has been sentenced to six months in prison for calling the PKK's imprisoned leader Abdullah Ocalan "Mr" during a program Yurttas attended on the Denmark-based pro-Kurdish Roj TV. The Diyarbakir prosecutor has launched an investigation against

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Mahmut Sakar and Irfan Dundar, the lawyers of Abdullah Ocalan, for raising charges at a news conference in Rome that their client was intoxicated. Zaman reports Glcihan Simsek, a DTP head in the province of Van, addressed a women's gathering in Kurdish, using the title "Mr." when referring to Ocalan. Simsek said any threat concerning the health of Ocalan in prison would strain the country. She called on the women at the meeting to speak Kurdish everywhere.

#### CHP Report on East, Southeast Turkey

The intellectual/Islamist-oriented Zaman reports a delegation from the main opposition party CHP submitted a report, "Problems in East and Southeast Turkey," to their leader Deniz Baykal after touring 10 provinces in the region, meeting local politicians, NGOs, and others. "The Kurdish party DTP is very effective in the region where the main problems are unemployment and poverty," the report says. It adds the region's ethnic structure and piety were the main reasons that people there stay away from CHP, a party they regard as aloof to religion. The report notes southeast Turkey was under the growing influence of the northern Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani, stressing Turkey needs a special regional development fund amounting to five percent of the national budget.

#### Editorial Commentary on the Middle East, Iraq

Cengiz Candar observes in the economic daily Referans: "Turkey is increasingly turning inwards. In the meantime, the Middle East is going through a climate change as diplomacy prevails and regional actors along with the US enter into the scene in order to help out to end violence and war. Saudi Arabia began to play a significant role and helped Palestinians to reach a consensus. Shortly after that we have seen another remarkable development when the leaders of Iran and Saudi Arabia met, the two opposite sides of the Middle East political scene. The upcoming Arab Summit in Riyadh needs to be watched closely because it will most likely create a significant impetus to the Middle East peace process. Turkey has an important role to play in this political scene. However its role and influence is mostly captivated by domestic political concerns and election-related considerations. Turkey's relationship with the EU suffers from the same situation. Given situations like this, any state is in need of a genuine statesman at an international caliber. Whether Turkey has that is the question."

In the economic-political daily Dunya, Zafer Atay comments on the situation in Iraq: "According to the US General Petraeus aptly evaluates, the current magnitude of the US forces in Iraq is not good enough to finish the job. That means the additional 21,500 forces should be approved one way or the other. American forces in Iraq are demoralized and also there is confusion about priorities between Washington and Baghdad. Some American thinkers, like Henry Kissinger and Mike McConnell express concern over the possibility of intervention by Turkey and Iran in the event of growing civil war in Iraq after the US completely pulls out. The magnitude of the fire in the region, if this happens, is frightening just to imagine."

Greece to Postpone Maneuvers before Upcoming Gul Visit  
The intellectual/Islamist-oriented Zaman reports Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis wanted the Greek-Greek Cypriot joint military exercises "Toksotis" to be postponed over concerns that the maneuvers would coincide with an upcoming visit by Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul to Athens on March 28-29. Defense Minister Evangelos Meimarakis, however, objected, saying maneuvers should be held on time as scheduled earlier, on March 27-28. Zaman cites Greek daily Ta Nea as reporting Toksotis will be postponed once again due to pressure coming from the US.

Conditional Access to You Tube  
Hurriyet, Vatan, Sabah, Milliyet, Bugun and others: Papers report that a court in Istanbul has ruled that it would revoke the ban on the YouTube, the video social networking web site owned by Google, as soon as it ascertained that the offending videos had been removed

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from the website. Earlier, access to YouTube's web site was blocked because of videos insulting Turkey's founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

TV Highlights  
NTV, 6.00 A.M.

#### Domestic News

- Volkan Karaova, the suspect who fired in the air during a mass held in Istanbul's Virgin Mary Church to commemorate slain journalist Hrant Dink, said he was planning to kill Armenian Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan.
- Arzuhan Yalcindag, chairwoman of Turkey's elite business grouping TUSIAD, told the press after meeting the opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal that Prime Minister Erdogan could become the new president if elected by the parliament. A disillusioned Baykal intervened, saying in a sarcastic tone, "And TUSIAD has no objections to Erdogan as president."
- Prime Minister Erdogan, accompanied by Turkish Cyprus leader Mehmet Ali Talat, will travel to Baku today to attend the "First Forum of World Azerbaijani and Turkish Diaspora Organizations."
- Justice Minister Cemil Cicek paid a visit to women inmates in a prison in Ankara on the eve of International Women's Day. Prime Minister Erdogan will participate in Women's Day celebrations in the central Anatolian city of Nevsehir on today.

#### International News

- The London-based al-Sharq al-Awsat claims Ali Reza Asqari, the Iranian former deputy defense minister who went missing in Turkey, is being interrogated by Americans in a north European country.
- Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki announced Iran will attend Iraq's neighbors' meeting to be held in Baghdad over the weekend.
- President Bush has called for an end to communism in Cuba after Fidel Castro passes away.
- Mark Mobius of Franklin Templeton Investments said turmoil at emerging markets would continue for another two or three months.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

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